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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-fifth session
Agenda item 12 (a)

INTEGRATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Written statement submitted by Freedom House, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[9 April 1999]

GE.99-12067 (E)

Violence against Women in Egypt

1. In 1997 there were 600 reported cases of illegal, manipulated or coerced marriages in Egypt. We wish to bring to the attention of the Commission the urgent situation of one such case that involves a 16-year-old Coptic girl, Suhir Shihata Gouda, from Abu-Tisht in southern Egypt. We are deeply concerned about what appears to be a pattern of abduction and violence against women and children, in some incidents with the complicity of Egyptian police.

2. On 14 March, Freedom House's Center for Religious Freedom received the following memorandum written by Samir Shihata, the brother of the abducted girl:

> "I have a 16-year-old sister and her name is Suhir Shihata Gouda, an 11th grade student at the Abu-Tisht Secondary School of Commerce. My father was shocked when my sister did not return home from school on 26 February 1999. We searched for her at her friend's and relatives' houses. An eyewitness told my father that he saw [Suhir] with our neighbour Saed Sadek Mahmoud, as he and other men took her away in a taxi. My father then rushed to the Abu-Tisht police station to report the incident. What happened next is unconscionable. A police officer then started assaulting and beating my father, cursing him with words I am ashamed to repeat. Since my father is an old man and was afraid [of further police brutality], he returned home and the case was never recorded. Three days later, my father and brother went back to the police station, and the same treatment [beating] was repeated on both. Since that day, my father has been lying in a hospital bed at the Dr. Qassab's hospital as a result of injuries he incurred at the police station... . Our mother is in much suffering because she does not know the status of her daughter.
>
> "On Monday, 8 March 1999, Mr. Saed Sadek Mahmoud came to our house along with ... [names of 21 individuals are available at Freedom House].
>
> "They ... surrounded our house and threatened [to harm us] if we took any legal action. They said to us 'your daughter has declared her Islamization at al-Azhar mosque'. They also said that Mr. Abdul-Hady al-Saman al-Delyou would get her married to one of his acquaintances. We then informed the police of what was said. They [the police] attempted to enter our town, but Abdul-Hady al-Saman al-Delyou and his followers blocked the road in front of the police cars and said to them: 'if you try to enter the town, we will kill all the Christians in the town and burn their houses ... we will take away all of their women and young girls'. The police cars then retreated.
>
> "The following day, the State Security Investigators [SSI] went to see him [Abdul-Hady al-Saman al-Delyou]. We then learned that they [the SSI] pressured her into marrying one of al-Delyou's followers ... ." 1/

1/ Translation from Arabic text, Center for Religious Freedom, Freedom House, 14 March 1999. Text within brackets is interpolated by Freedom House for clarification.

3. Freedom House received subsequent reports that Suhir sought to escape her captors but was caught and badly beaten, and that she has attempted suicide.

4. In a number of cases that Freedom House has investigated in Egypt, other young girls, such as Teresa Andrawes from Giza, near Cairo, have also been taken to be forcibly converted and married, often with the cooperation of the local police. Some have involved girls below the age at which, under Egyptian law, a person can marry or change his or her religion.

5. Freedom House is also concerned by reports that women and girls in Abu-Tisht are living in daily fear of being abducted. Freedom House demand Suhir's immediate return to her family, the investigation and prosecution of her abductors, and adequate police protection for the women of Abu-Tisht.

6. Freedom House urges the Special Rapporteur on violence against women to investigate the case of Suhir Shihata Gouda as well as the similar case of Teresa Andrawes, and the hundreds of other reports of abduction and forcible conversion.

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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-fifth session
Agenda item 9

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD

Joint written statement submitted by World Confederation of Labour, World Federation of Trade Unions, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status; Association of American Jurists, Indian Movement "Tupaj Amaru", Inter African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children, International Association for the Defence of Religious Liberty, International Association of Democratic Lawyers, International Federation of ACAT (Action of Christians for the Abolition of Torture), International Law Association, International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples, North South XXI, Pax Romana, War Resisters' International, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, World Organization against Torture, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status; European Union of Public Relations, International Baccalaureate Organization, International Educational Development, Inc., International Peace Bureau, International Institute for Peace, Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples, United Nations Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, World Christian Life Community, non-governmental organizations on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[12 April 1999]

Statement on Iran

1. Continuing human rights violations in Iran have been a matter of grave concern. In late 1998, a number of writers and dissidents who had been tolerated for two decades by the authorities mysteriously disappeared or were murdered. The leaders tried to blame the opponents of the regime and foreign enemies for these murders. Under public pressure, however, the Ministry of Intelligence admitted to these murders. In its report in February 1999, a well-known human rights organization wrote: "It appears that in recent months we have been witnessing a serious deterioration of fundamental freedoms in Iran."

2. In reference to recent killing this report states: "Even though establishing responsibilities is rather difficult in Iran due to conflicts among those who control power, there is no doubt that the Iranian authorities are clearly implicated in the resumption of suppression, particularly the murder of intellectuals in recent months."

3. Although several months have passed since the murders, the identities of the perpetrators have not yet been disclosed, nor have they been prosecuted. Instead, the officials of the Government of Iran, including its President, praised the personnel of the Ministry of Intelligence for their activities.

4. In his interim report to the General Assembly, the Special Representative of the Commission on Human Rights on the Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran noted that "executions seemed to continue at a faily high level" (see para. 63 of the Special Representative's report to the Commission (E/CN.4/1999/32)).

5. In contrast to expectations among some in the world community, since Khatami has become President, there have been more than 340 executions. In the meantime, nine individuals were sentenced to stoning. Khatami's Government spokesman stated that stoning should be carried out before a small crowd so that it would not be made public abroad. Torture and other cruel punishments are widely practised in Iran. At least 28 Iranian dissidents have been assassinated abroad in the past 22 months during Khatami's presidency.

6. Popular protests are brutually suppressed. On 22 February 1999, in a peaceful demonstration in the city of Sanandaj (in Iranian Kurdistan, in the west of Iran), 20 were killed, many more wounded and 2,000 arrested, when the revolutionary guards attacked protesters. The State-run media confirmed the killing of "a number of citizens of the Islamic Republic by security forces". On 17 February, in villages around Babol in the northern Mazandaran province, the guards attacked and crushed a peaceful demonstration. Two children were killed.

7. In 1998, the situation of women has deteriorated. Ratification of a bill segregating medical and health care has increased pressure on women. In the meantime, another restrictive bill considered defending equal rights for women and men in the media as a crime. In addition, beating and intimidating women on the streets for mal-veiling still goes on and the Government has adopted no practical measure to stop this.

8. Religious minorities continue to be suppressed in Iran. After a six-year lull, the execution of Baha'is resumed last summer and this is yet another indication of the deteriorating human rights situation in Iran.

9. A list of 3,200 Mojahedin who were among the victims in the massacre of 30,000 political prisoners in 1988 was recently released by the Mojahedin Organization. Among them, there were hundreds of women, who were executed after suffering several years of torture in the prisons for simply standing firm in their beliefs. A number of perpetrators of these executions are now in Khatami's Government or act as advisers or deputies to him.

10. All indications in Iran point to the fact that the human rights situation in Iran has deteriorated. A distinctive feature of this suppression is that it has been institutionalized. Implementing the law in Iran is, therefore, equal to human rights violations. A well-known human rights organization reported: "The foundations of the regime in Iran have made the human rights violations become a natural product of the judicial and political establishment of the country".

11. There are no political parties and forums independent from ruling factions in Iran. People play no part in determining their own future. In his latest report, the Special Representative referred to "increased pressure on the press", and stated that a number of journals had been banned or suspended for offences such as "insulting the late Ayatollah Khomeini" (E/CN.4/1999/32, para. 13).

12. The Government of Iran still refrains from any cooperation with judicial authorities in different countries to implement justice with regard to the murderers of dissidents abroad, including the murderers of Dr. Kazem Rajavi in Geneva, Mohammad Hossein Naghdi in Rome and Zahra Rajabi in Istanbul, all well-known Iranian resistance activists in the field of human rights.

13. In recent months, majorities in the Parliaments of the United Kingdom, Italy, Luxembourg and Belgium, and the United States Congress declared in their statements that there had been no improvement in the human rights situation in Iran and that executions and suppression were continuing under Khatami. A new wave of arrests of former political prisoners by security organs of the regime and an increase in political executions, including those of 18 sympathizers of the Mojahedin in March 1999, have been a cause for grave concern.

14. In the light of numerous cases of human rights abuses in Iran, it is necessary for the Commission on Human Rights to adopt a firm and substantive resolution condemning the human rights violations in Iran unconditionally. Experience had shown that any concession to the mullahs only leads to deterioration of human rights in Iran. Judgement of the regime should be based on Khatami's deeds in the past two years and not just on his words.

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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-fifth session
Agenda item 11 (d)

CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS:
INDEPENDENCE OF THE JUDICIARY, ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE, IMPUNITY

Written statement submitted by the European Federation of Road Traffic Victims, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[16 April 1999]

GE.99-12580 (E)

Road death and injury - a major, worldwide, public health and human rights issue

1. This submission is intended to draw the attention of the Commission on Human Rights to a huge group of people, whose numbers grow daily, who experience the sudden, violent deaths of their loved ones, often their children, or life-changing injury, and whose plight receives little, if any recognition: road traffic victims.

2. Worldwide, every year between 700,000 and 1 million people are killed, and many millions more bereaved, 2 million are permanently disabled and 20 million are injured - a truly war-like casualty toll. A recent study by WHO, the Red Cross and the Harvard School of Public Health has projected that if present trends continue, by 2020 road death and injury will become the third biggest cause of death and injury worldwide, moving from its present ninth place in just 20 years.

3. It is clear that road death and injury presents a major public health problem for every country in the world. The socio-economic costs are enormous: US$ 1,000 billion every year, a sum equivalent to the annual worldwide production cost of cereals.

4. The fact that so many people die needlessly, that so very many suffer injury with ruined lives as a consequence, that the young, the old and the feeble-bodied are at particular disadvantage and risk, will be a matter of grave concern to the Commission. So far, more than 25 million people have been killed on the roads worldwide, with innumerable millions disabled and injured.

5. The scale is not the only problem which must be of concern: of grave concern also must be the widespread leniency shown by the legal system to road traffic offenders and the casual attitude demonstrated by most agencies dealing with road traffic victims. These not only contribute to the carnage continuing, and even worsening, but also cause great suffering and hardship to the majority of road traffic victims.

6. A 1997 study by the European Federation of Road Traffic Victims, "Impact of Road Death and Injury", found that the majority of victims suffered a substantial drop in their quality of life and living standards for long periods, often permanently, following injury or bereavement through a road crash. The frequently derisory sentences against traffic violators prevent the adequate application of preventative safety measures and is the reason for the toll continuing and even increasing.

7. We request the Commission on Human Rights to consider this situation under item 11 (d) of the agenda of the present session, in order to ensure that insurance companies, civil justice and social assistance institutions provide the necessary assistance to road traffic victims, especially the disabled, who at present often receive inadequate assistance and compensation, often leading to great hardship and making it impossible for them to lead a dignified existence.

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